

TO HER GRACE THE
DUCHESS OF ARGYLL.

MADAM,

YOU being a Native of Hemingford Grey,
in the County of Huntingdon, I am in-
duced with all gratitude to inscribe the follow-
ing Thanksgiving Sermon to your Grace; from
whom I have received the greatest Obligations.
And remain,

May it please your Grace,

Your Grace's most faithful,

obedient, and humble Servant,

*Hemingford Grey,
29 July, 1784.*

CHARLES DICKENS.



A

THANSGIVING SERMON.

ZECHARIAH viii. 5.

— THE STREETS OF THE CITY SHALL BE FULL OF
BOYS AND GIRLS PLAYING IN THE STREETS THEREOF.

IN this Prophecy (my beloved Brethren,) which consists of a variety of predictive serious matter, we find especially recorded the return of the Jews unto Jerusalem (after seventy years captivity in Babylon); and the mercy of God, towards that *Nation*; wherein is set forth most pathetically, his Lovingkindness to *his People*; and the favour which He sheweth to a *repenting City*, — whose streets shall be filled with Boys and Girls, playing in the streets thereof.

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From this blessed promise to the Jews, made aforetime of God through the mouth of his holy prophet, the present joyful Occasion naturally leadeth us, to be thankful; to bless the name of God for his mercies vouchsafed unto Us, in that the Day of *Mourning*, (the late *bloody, extended, and expensive War*) is now over; and the season of *Prosperity* (the present *necessary and saving Peace*) is at hand; — wherein another scene of Affairs taketh place; and nothing is to be heard (or should be heard) but *Praise and Thanksgiving*: — which, of all religious *Duties*, is the most pleasing and acceptable *Service*, we can at any time *possibly*, render unto God, — who willeth not, that we offer unto Him the flesh of Bulls, or blood of Goats, — but Praise and Thanksgiving: — the reasonableness of which, together with its *Use*, and our *Obligations* to it, will appear chiefly from hence, — that it is a debt of *Nature*, as well as a profitable, and a pleasurable *Service*.

The original design of making man (we know, according to *Scripture*) was, that he might praise and laud his *Creator*; and when the world was all *framed, put together, and finished*, — God said; Let us make man in our *Image*, after our own *Likeness*! intimating the *want* of a *new Creature* not yet *formed*, to behold its *Beauty*, and do honour to its *Builder*: — For, although the Things already *made*, did every one of them in some sense declare, the *Glory of God*, — and shew forth his *handy-work*; yet, the
glory

glory was *defective*, and the praise *imperfect*: — wherefore God, did not end his work, 'till the *sixth Day* was over, — wherein He created man, to supply that *Want*.

To him; (God's *best*, his *noblest*, and most *glorious Work*) was *originally* then given, the full *Dominion* over all Things in *Earth, Air, and Sea*; and he was placed in the world to *contemplate*, to *meditate* upon, and adore the *divine Wisdom*, — to offer *Incense* and *Praise*, and give *Thanks*: — So that, the *Reason* with which our minds are *furnished*; — the *faculties* we enjoy above all other *Creatures*, if they do their office *at all*, are not *darkened* and *confused*, — cannot but apprehend God as the *loveliest*, the *best*, and *most perfect* Being; and admire his *perfections*, — which is strictly meant by *praise*; — wherein the first Thing *observable*, is, — that it is usually expressed in such *Terms*, and by such *Words* as signify our owning, our acknowledging and declaring his *Goodness*, — and the *Wonders* He doth for the *Children of Men*.

Thus it was that holy David, and all the Saints have been always used to praise God, — by *confessing* to Him, acknowledging and setting forth his *Name*, his *Glory*, his *Wisdom*, and his *Power*, — by daily praising Him with *joyful Lips*; by ascribing unto the Lord, *Worship* and *Strength*: So that, whoever will perform this Duty *aright*, — must, as *They* did, confess unto the Lord, and praise his holy Name, by telling of his *Salvation* from Day to Day, —

declaring his *honour* unto the *Heathen*, and his *wonders* unto all *People*: — For by the word of the Lord, were the Heavens made; and all the Host of *them*, by the breath of his *Mouth*; — the *Earth* also, and all *Things* therein.

Moreover, it is the voice of Nature, (as far as *Gratitude* itself is so) that the good Things we receive from God, the *blessings* which are daily showered down upon us, from the highest Heavens, — should be all sent back *thither*, in Praise and Thanksgiving; as the *Rivers* run into the *Sea*, and return thither, unto the *Place* from whence they came: — when, whoso is *wise*, will ponder these Things; and *They* shall understand the Lovingkindness of the Lord.

Let us therefore, (*my Friends*,) on this *Day* especially, which the Lord hath *made*, be joyful and glad in *it*! nor ever cease to act our *parts*, in being *grateful* to praise God in the *Sanctuary*, and proclaim his *Goodness* towards *us*, — the wonders also, which He every where doth for the children of men: — since *This* was the very *end* of our *Creation*; and the purpose, the *chief purpose* of our being sent into this world.

Had man, *I trow*, who was at *first* created in *Innocence*, continued *stedfast* in that *happy state*, nor had passed or transgressed the *bounds* which God had set, — nor broken his holy *Covenant*, — his *worship* and his *work* had been only praise, *continually*; and nothing had been left for him to do, beyond the enjoying *perfect good*: — For, in Para-
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dise *originally*, was nothing but *Praise*; neither shall there be any thing else, in *Heaven*, — *where*,

(All that we know, of what *They* do *above*,
Is that they *sing*, *rejoice*, give *thanks*, and *love*.) —

But, being now fallen from that blessed state of *Happiness*, — having contracted *Guilt*, and forfeited our *Right* to the *divine Mercies*, — *Prayer* and *Confession* are become necessary to sue out our *Pardon*, to help our *Infirmities*, to blot out the *Handwriting* that is against us; to retrieve our *Loss*, and to restore *us* to God's *Favour*; — who, upon confession of our *Sins* and *Repentance*, is faithful and just to forgive us our *Sins*, and to cleanse us from all *Unrighteousness*; to restore us to that *happy state*, wherein we shall be able to live for ever, *without them*.

Thus were we *originally*, All created of God, without *want*, and without *sin*, — to his *Praise*, and to his *Glory*; — and, it will be the end of every *righteous man*, whose Death is so greatly *coveted* of the *wicked*, to praise and glorify God *hereafter*, in the highest *Heavens*; — which, as it is very natural to desire *Happiness*, we cannot but wish at least, and implore surely, that it may finally be all our *portions*, to sing praises unto our God, and rejoice ever before *Him* in his *House*, where there are many *Mansions*: — For whether there be *Confession*, that shall *cease*; whether there be *Prayer*, that shall *end*; — but Praise and
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Thanksgiving last for ever: * — The *first* verily, are *temporary*, — the work of *Sinners*; whilst the last, is *everlasting*, — and the employ of *Angels*: — and the *matter*, about which it is *conversant*, is always the perfections of the *Deity*, and the divine *Nature*.

Herein too, is shewn the excellence of this *Duty*, and the preeminence it hath over all other parts of *Christian Worship*; — which leads me further, to shew the pleasure and satisfaction there is in performing it; what a good thing it is to sing praises unto our God, — especially at a Time like the *present*, — when, we have so much reason to be glad, to *rejoice*, and give *Thanks*: — For, though our Enemies did greatly molest and trouble us, (*some of whom*, we too *lightly regarded*) by harrassing us in all Quarters the most distant, even in the *East*, and particularly in the *West*, as well as nearer Home, — *yea*, and at Home; yet God was pleased to be with *us*, to fight

* The honourable Robert Boyle, Esq; in his Theological Works, observes, — that some men indeed, say more than others, — but none enough on a Subject, *the spirits of just men made perfect*, cannot celebrate. Perhaps, we may think, that because our praises exceed any other Subject, they are worthy of God; but our expressions at the best, can but express our conceptions, which being notions of finite Creatures, cannot reach what is infinite: and though inflamed by that inaccessible Light inhabited by Him, we adore; yet our expressions extend no further than our Devotion, declaring how much we honour Him, — not, what He is; — which none but an infinite Intellect, can do.

However, to praise God, is a Debt which will continue as long as the Obligations, — and can never be paid for want of Coin of just Value.

fight for *us*, and hath saved *us*, by making *them* finally, to be at *peace* with *us*: — who formerly said, — and by implication certainly, doth to *us*, as to the *Jews*, — that there shall yet be old men and women in the streets of our *Jerusalem*, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age; — that, the streets too of our *Cities*, shall be filled with Boys and Girls playing in the streets thereof.

That it is the most pleasing part, (I need not say,) of our Devotions at *all Times*, to be thankful; — whilst the *best*, the *fittest*, the most *proper* One surely, to praise God, is, when we are *merry*, when we have so much cause to be so, — (as on *this Day*) — to express our mirth *solemnly*, with an awful *reverence* and pious *Hallelujahs* proceeding always from a *lively* and *cheerful Temper*, — whose whole *composition* is such, as throughout bespeaks *Ease* and *Delight*: — and should indeed, the truly Thankful, be *restrained* — should *They*, whose Hearts overflow with *gratitude*, be *prevented* shewing it, — it would be *Pain* doubtless, and *Grief* to *them*: whilst then, shall their souls be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, when their *mouth* praiseth God, with *joyful Lips*.

O praise the Lord, saith the holy David; for it is a good Thing to sing praises unto our God: — yea, a joyful and pleasant 'Thing it is, to be *thankful*: — It gladdens and improves all our *Faculties*, and sets the soul on work, to attain *perfection*: — It promotes in *us*, an exquisite and
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lively sense of the *divine Honour*, — and an high *Indignation* of mind at every *Thing*, that *profanes* it : — For, what we *value*, that we *love*; what we *love*, that we *delight* in; nor can ever bear with *patience*, to hear or see it *slighted*, or *abused*.

Thus, our frequent *attention* to the *divine Attributes*, whilst contemplating God's *perfections*, — will discover to us, our own *weakness* and *unworthiness*, — by causing us to see and feel, that we are but *Vanity*; — that verily, all that cometh, is *so*, — which is an excellent, a most useful *Lesson* for *those* to learn, who are most apt to be *presumptuous*, and *vain*, and despise *others*; who especially, when some little outward *privileges* distinguish them from their *Brethren*, their *Fellow-creatures*, and *Fellow-christians*, — fancy themselves *wiser*, and every way better, in their own *conceits*, — than seven men, that can render a *reason*: Whilst, by considering God's *excellencies* and *perfections*, their proud stomachs must *buckle to*; and they will learn, not to think of themselves more *highly*, than they *ought* to think; — but to think *soberly*; and make a God of nothing *else* but the *One eternal, invisible, immortal Being*.

Upon the *whole*, — this *Duty* recommends *itself* to us, by several great and peculiar *privileges*, in that, it is the *end* of our *Existence*, — of our being made and created; the rule and end of our *Nature*; the most excellent part of our *religious worship*: — and endureth *for ever*.

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Wherefore *They*, who live in the neglect of *it*, — whether *secretly*, or in *publick*, — by no means answer God's end, in making *them*; — which must needs be a great offence unto Him, — to *provoke* Him to dash them in *pieces*, as uselefs *vessels*, — and destroy *them*.

Whereas *They*, who are always praising God, — are always doing the work He made them for, and sent them into the world *about*; and so, always *please Him*: — nor is there any *Thing* pleaseth God so *much*, as for a man to *thank*, and *praise Him*: — Whoso offereth me *Thanks*, and *Praise*, saith He, — he *glorifieth me*.

Neither do any live in his *Favour*, and under his *Protection* so much as *They*, who are always *thankful*, and praise the Name of God not only with *their Lips*, but in *their Lives*.

And if *Moses*, and *Israel*, and *Deborah*, and *Hannah*, and *Jehoshaphat*, praised God for particular Instances of his *Mercy*, — the return of *Peace*, surely, claimeth *Our's*; — that we were not *consumed*, — both *We*, and our *King*.

Blessed be God then, let us All say, — who hath not cast out our repeated *Fastings* and *Prayers*, and *Supplications* for *Deliverance*, but delayed only to answer them, 'till a *Day of Salvation*, and an *acceptable Time*, which is

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now *happily* come, — and the Hour of *Prosperity*, (we trust) with it, — wherein the streets of *our City*, of every large *Town*, and small *Village* in *Great Britain*, are full of Boys and Girls playing in the streets thereof; — where shortly, our *Hope* is, that *Corn* shall make the young *Men* cheerful; and *new Wine* the Maids, — in the time of *Vintage* and *Harvest*. (Zech. ix. 17.)

But, let us All, (I beseech you,) take especial care to make the proper uses of *this*, and every other *Blessing*! In the midst of so much real Joy and Gladness, let us learn to be *moderate*, *meek*, and *prudent*; to serve God *faithfully*, *lustily*, and with a good *Courage*! and love one another *sincerely*! when, the *wicked* shall cease from *troubling us*, — and we shall not be ashamed probably hereafter, to *speak again* with our *Enemies* in the *Gate*: — For God indeed, (we *know* and *feel*,) hath done great Things for us, whereof we have *just reason* to rejoice, — though He hath *deservedly*, very lately *humbled us*, for our *Transgressions*,) — and our *Obligations* to Him, are of the *highest Nature*: — yet, should we be tempted not to *persevere* in our *Duty to Him*, should we not suffer his *Goodness* to lead us to *Repentance*, — our *last Estate*, our latter End will be worse than the *beginning*, — even *All that is past*: — so that, we may expect nothing less than that He
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should make us, a *bye word* among the *Nations*, that are round about us, — if not in the *East*, in the *West*, in the *North*, and in the *South*: and as remarkable *Instances* in future, of his *Wrath* and *Vengeance*, — as we have in former *Wars*, been particularly *Victorious*, — and the visible *Objects* of his *Love* and *Favour*.

Now, the only *Terms* verily, on which we may reasonably expect the continuance of his *Mercies*, (of his *Loving-kindness* towards us, and particularly that, we Here celebrate in his *holy Temple*, the return of *Peace* again, to our almost ruined Country, — to our distracted, and sadly impoverished One, —) are our breaking our *Covenant* with *Death*, and our fatal *Agreement* with *Hell*; — our performing our *Engagements* with God, which we *All* entered into, at our *Baptism*; our denying ungodliness and worldly Lusts; our living soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, — by turning unto Him, who ought to be feared; and doing works meet for *Repentance*; by seconding our daily *Prayers* with our constant endeavours, to fulfil his *Will*; — That his great and powerful Name may be hallowed, his glorious Kingdom advanced, and his just Rule over us, and all Mankind, be as faithfully submitted to, and his every Law observed Here, on Earth, — as by the *holy Angels* in Heaven; — by loving moreover, one another

other without *Disimulation*: — Since, if God hath made *Us*, to be the *Objects* of *his Love*; why should we not be so, of *one another's*? And, there is no *Fear* in *Love*.

Let us however, (*I pray*,) be as well wise as *Serpents*, as we should be harmless as *Doves*! and in this *our Day*, carefully mark *Those*, who cause *Divisions*, and *Offences* still among us, to *distract* us, if not to ruin us; (notwithstanding it is *impossible*, but that *Offences* will come; —) and if *possible*, as much as *lieth* in us, let us carefully avoid *them*! Let us suppress too, all those *irregular*, *headstrong humours* and *passions* within *ourselves*, or that we daily see in *others*, — which at any *Time* must dispose *Us* to be easily wrought upon by the *Arts* and *Contrivances* of the *Proud*, the *Ambitious*, the *Crafty* and *Cunning Ones* among us, — who would fain *direct* us, *lord* it over us, and *undo* us: — *Yea*, let us put on, I beseech you, as the *Elect* of God, *holy* and *beloved* — bowels of *mercy*, *kindness*, *meekness*, *longsuffering*, — *forbearing* one another, and *forgiving* one another, if any man have a *Quarrel* against *any*; even as *Christ* forgave *Us*, so, also do *We*! — having within *ourselves* *effectually*, that *Charity*, which is *kind*, which *envyeth* not, — *vaunteth* not *itself*, — is not *puffed up*, — seeketh not *her own*, — is not *easily provoked*, — thinketh no *evil*, — rejoiceth not in *iniquity*, but
rejoiceth

rejoiceth in the *Truth*; — beareth *all Things*, believeth *all Things*, hopeth *all Things*, endureth *all Things*.

When, the God of *Peace*, shall be with *us*, — granting *Us* in this *World*, knowledge of his *Truth*, — and in the *World* to come, *Life everlasting*.

And, let all the odious *Appellations of Parties*, and *Distinctions*, and *Coalitions* be done away, and lost in *Love*! — That there be no other *Contentions left*, than those *kind Ones*, — who shall do his *Neighbour*, his *King*, and his *Country*, the *best Service*, — the most *desirable Good*!

'Thus, and only thus, let all our *Emulation* be to help *one another*! to outdo *one another* in hearty *Affection*; with truly *laudable* and *zealous Endeavours* for old *England*!

And lastly, may such *happy Agreement* not cease in *us*, 'till the *Kingdom of this World* be swallowed up in *Christ's glorious One*, in which, (as hath been prophesied,) the *Wolf* shall dwell with the *Kid*, — and the *Calf*, and the *young Lion*, and the *Fatling* together, — and a little *Child* shall lead *Them*: — When, there will be no hurting, nor destroying in all God's holy *Mountain*; and the *Rest*, which He shall give to *Mankind*, shall be *glorious*.

O the *blessed Day*, when these *Things* shall come to pass! May God prepare us all for it by *Faith*, and *Repentance*, and *good Works*, — through *Him*, who was both the *Desire*
and

*and Blessing of all Nations,—(Jesus Christ, the righteous—)
our Saviour, our Sanctifier, our Redeemer!*

To whom, with the *Father* and the holy *Ghost*, be ascribed all *Honour, Praise, and Thanksgiving* in the *Church*, world without end. Amen.



